

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

The following listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

Listing of Claims:

1. (Currently Amended) A method of machining a flange of a wheel arch to bend said flange ~~(5)~~ of said wheel arch ~~(2)~~ of a vehicle body ~~(1)~~, comprising the steps of:

conveying a general-purpose actuator ~~(96)~~ to a machining position for said flange ~~(5)~~ with a moving mechanism ~~(34)~~ while a dedicated die ~~(104)~~ is being mounted on said general-purpose actuator ~~(96)~~ provided on said moving mechanism ~~(34)~~; and

actuating said general-purpose actuator ~~(96)~~ to bring said dedicated die ~~(104)~~ into abutment against said flange ~~(5)~~ and to cause said dedicated die ~~(104)~~ to bend said flange ~~(5)~~.

2. (Currently Amended) A method of machining a flange according to claim 1, wherein said flanges ~~(5)~~ of respective wheel arches ~~(2)~~ on both sides of said vehicle body ~~(1)~~ can be bent substantially simultaneously when at least a pair of said moving mechanisms ~~(34, 36)~~ disposed respectively on both sides of said vehicle body ~~(1)~~ is actuated.

3. (Currently Amended) A method of machining a flange according to claim 1, wherein said dedicated die ~~(104)~~ is selected depending on the shape of said flange ~~(5)~~ and the selected dedicated die ~~(104)~~ is removably mounted on said general-purpose actuator ~~(96)~~.

4. (Currently Amended) A method of machining a flange according to claim 1, wherein a machining station ~~(S2)~~ for bending said flange ~~(5)~~ is included in a machining station for performing a machining process different from a bending process.

5. (Currently Amended) A method of machining a flange of a wheel arch to bend said flange ~~(5)~~ of said wheel arch ~~(2)~~ of a vehicle body ~~(1)~~, comprising the steps of:

disposing workpiece guide means ~~(85)~~ with a predetermined clearance provided on an outer surface of said flange of said wheel arch ~~(2)~~ and disposing workpiece rest means ~~(94)~~ with a predetermined clearance provided on an inner surface of said flange of said wheel arch ~~(2)~~;

moving said workpiece guide means ~~(85)~~ and said workpiece rest means ~~(94)~~ closely to each other to dispose said workpiece guide means ~~(85)~~ on the outer surface of said flange and to dispose said workpiece rest means ~~(94)~~ on the inner surface of said flange; and

bending said flange ~~(5)~~ with workpiece bending means ~~(104)~~ while said workpiece guide means ~~(85)~~ is holding the outer surface of said flange and said workpiece rest means ~~(94)~~ is holding the inner surface of said flange.

6. (Currently Amended) An apparatus for machining a flange of a wheel arch to bend said flange ~~(5)~~ of said wheel arch ~~(2)~~ of a vehicle body ~~(1)~~, comprising:

a moving mechanism ~~(34)~~ for conveying a general-purpose actuator ~~(96)~~ to a machining position for said flange ~~(5)~~, with said general-purpose actuator ~~(96)~~ provided on said moving mechanism ~~(34)~~; and

a dedicated die ~~(104)~~ replaceably mounted on said general-purpose actuator ~~(96)~~, for bending said flange ~~(5)~~ when said general-purpose actuator ~~(96)~~ is actuated.

7. (Currently Amended) An apparatus for machining a flange according to claim 6, wherein at least one of said moving mechanisms ~~(34, 36)~~ is disposed on both sides of said vehicle body ~~(1)~~, for substantially simultaneously bending said flanges ~~(5)~~ of respective wheel arches ~~(2)~~ on both sides of said vehicle body ~~(1)~~.

8. (Currently Amended) An apparatus for machining a flange according to claim 6, comprising a plurality of dedicated dies ~~(104)~~ selectable depending on the shape of said flange ~~(5)~~.

9. (Currently Amended) An apparatus for machining a flange according to claim 6, wherein a machining station ~~(S2)~~ for bending said flange ~~(5)~~ is included in a machining station for performing a machining process different from a bending process.

10. (Currently Amended) An apparatus for machining a flange according to claim 9, comprising a dedicated die replacing section ~~(112)~~ disposed outside of an operating range of said machining station ~~(S2)~~, with a plurality of said dedicated dies ~~(114)~~ being stockable in said dedicated die replacing section ~~(112)~~.

11. (Currently Amended) An apparatus for machining a flange of a wheel arch to bend said flange ~~(5)~~ of said wheel arch ~~(2)~~ of a vehicle body ~~(1)~~, comprising:

a base ~~(46)~~;

first slide means ~~(55)~~ slidably mounted on said base ~~(46)~~, with workpiece guide means ~~(85)~~ being disposed on said first slide means ~~(55)~~;

second slide means ~~(57)~~ slidably mounted on said base ~~(46)~~, with workpiece rest means ~~(94)~~ and workpiece bending means ~~(104)~~ being disposed on said second slide means ~~(57)~~; and

mutual distance changing means ~~(65)~~ for moving said first slide means ~~(55)~~ and said second slide means ~~(57)~~ toward and away from each other.

12. (Currently Amended) An apparatus for machining a flange according to claim 11, wherein said workpiece guide means ~~(85)~~ has a nonmetallic pad ~~(84)~~ disposed in a workpiece abutment region thereof.

13. (Currently Amended) An apparatus for machining a flange according to claim 11, wherein said mutual distance changing means ~~(65)~~ has a cylinder ~~(66)~~ coupled to said first slide means ~~(55)~~ and said second slide means ~~(57)~~.